



Altering the Future of Sunshine's Pet Friends

Project #

23-8049

County: MD

Number of Cats Spayed: 152

Number of Dogs Spayed: 45

Number of Cats Neutered: 148

Number of Dogs Neutered: 45

Amount Received: \$25,800

Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): \$0

Project Synopsis:

This project funded part of a multi-year effort to reduce the number of homeless and unwanted pet animals brought in to the Anne Arundel County and Howard County animal control facilities. This goal was accomplished through an aggressive, targeted campaign to spay/neuter pets owned by low-income individuals and families in Jessup, Linthicum, Brooklyn, as well as portions of Elkridge and Curtis Bay. We were funded to spay/neuter 300 pet cats and 90 pet dogs above and beyond our organization's regular pet-focused programs.



Maryland Department of Agriculture
Spay and Neuter Grants Program



Project Description:

Sunshine's Friends Cat and Dog Rescue (www.sunshinesfriends.org) has been a 501(c)(3) non-profit charity since 2014 operating within 20 miles of our main location in Jessup, MD. The area is a mix of light industry, warehouses, and residential neighborhoods, and the area along the US Route 1 corridor and southern Baltimore beltway has a higher than average number of low-income residents who need help. This project, which ran from October 2022 to June 2023, managed to spay/neuter 300 pet cats and 90 pet dogs for low-income families within specific neighborhoods/zip codes in the area. As part of a multi-year project, we have steadily reduced the number of unwanted pets surrendered to local county animal shelters due to the inability to afford veterinary procedures. The project funded the cost of the spay/neuter surgeries and rabies vaccines for the pets. We supplied transportation when needed and covered vaccines, microchipping, and additional medical care if necessary to give the pet a good quality of life.

Summary of Approach:

We start with advertising/outreach. We work with community associations, social service and local groups, speaking at meetings and going door-to-door with brochures. We post on social media and provide handouts to our partner vets and pet stores. We spread the word about spaying/neutering/vaccinating pets in general, and about our projects specifically. We used a dual approach, covering both pet and feral focused projects to maximize our effectiveness. Outreach ran continuously, even after we finished the MDA-funded projects early. We partnered with 6 spay/neuter vet clinics who substantially discount their rates. Our organization also contributed costs of extra medical care, vaccines, microchips, and flea treatment for people who can't afford them. This increased our effectiveness and kept more pets with families and out of animal control facilities. We provided transportation to vets to about 75% of pet owners who do not have cars, work odd hours, or cannot take time off from work.

Accomplishments:

In just 9 months of the planned year-long project, we managed to spay/neuter 300 pet cats and 90 pet dogs above and beyond the procedures and other emergency surgeries we provide through our regular in-house programs. We prevented numerous potential pet surrenders due to unwanted litters of puppies/kittens or medical care that people could not afford. We also used our funds to cover the extra costs for testing, vaccinations, microchipping, and flea treatments for pets spayed/neutered under the project. Several pet owners in the targeted areas stated they were extremely grateful for our program because it prevented them from having to surrender their pet to the county animal control where it would possibly end up euthanized.



Maryland Department of Agriculture
Spay and Neuter Grants Program



Lessons Learned:

Demand for programs like these outstrips the available supply due to the macro-economic downturn in the country. A shortage of veterinarians is limiting the availability of appointments. We had to decrease our in-person, door-to-door canvassing and our on-line, social media promotions to avoid overextending or being unable to accommodate the demand. We devoted extra time and effort into coordinating and scheduling vet appointments for pets and used multiple vet practices to spread out the available spay/neuter slots. We managed to avoid the typical 3 - 4 month wait for appointments through close coordination with our partner vets.

For More Information Contact:

Keith Burnham

Organization Name and Address:

7406 Belclare Court

Jessup, Maryland 20794

Phone: 410-960-2677

Email: keith.burnham@sunshinesfriends.org



Maryland Department of Agriculture
Spay and Neuter Grants Program

